



M E D I A R E L E A S E

STATE OF TENNESSEE
BOARD OF PROBATION & PAROLE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NOVEMBER 26, 2007

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BOPP EXPANDS CONTINUOUS MONITORING OF SERIOUS OFFENDERS IN WEST TENNESSEE

Nashville, Tennessee --- Tennessee Board of Probation & Parole officers from 20 west Tennessee counties are being trained today on use of Global Positioning System (GPS) monitoring equipment. This important technology gives authorities another method to use in keeping tabs on convicted sexual predators and other violent offenders.

The Board of Probation & Parole (BOPP) is expanding use of this powerful tool to strengthen supervision of sex offenders and other high-risk offenders. Following a pilot project on GPS use, the General Assembly approved additional appropriations to take the program statewide. Jessica's Law (honoring nine-year-old Florida murder victim Jessica Lunsford) passed in the Tennessee General Assembly this year, and requires constant monitoring of anyone convicted of rape of a child.

"The legislature has given us an important job to do," said Board Chairman Charles Traughber. "One of the Board's primary goals is to make communities safer. This technology is a high-tech tool that complements our other efforts to accomplish this goal."

GPS is one component of BOPP's newly created Programmed Supervision Unit (PSU), which is comprised of specially trained probation/parole officers. These officers will work with targeted offenders in Benton, Carroll, Chester, Crockett, Decatur, Dyer, Fayette, Gibson, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Henry, Lake, Lauderdale, Madison, McNairy, Obion, Tipton and Weakley Counties.

Kirk Smith, Assistant Director of Field Services for BOPP, oversees the GPS program. She said, "As we complete more specialized risk assessments on other offenders, the program will probably expand further."

GPS monitoring relies on tracking devices and ankle bracelet transmitters worn by offenders. Tracking data is processed through a web-based application. Alerts are received at the GPS Operations Center in Nashville, which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week to monitor offender activities statewide. Alerts are processed, and probation/parole officers are notified when further action is needed. Alerts might include signals that indicate tampering with devices, offender presence in a forbidden area or failure to be at a specific location at a scheduled time (curfew, attending treatment, reporting for employment, etc.). Alerts are also triggered if units are not recharged on time, or if the unit is not being carried properly.

The Board of Probation and Parole (<http://www2.state.tn.us/bopp/home.htm>) is an independent seven-member board whose members are appointed by the Governor. The Board is charged with the responsibility of deciding which eligible felony offenders will be granted parole and released from incarceration to community-based supervision. Along with the supervision of those granted parole, the Board is also responsible for supervising felony offenders who are placed on probation by criminal courts.

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